

By Bill Lambrecht, Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - Stimulus critics parading about have some new fodder if they don't mind dissing green jobs: a gush of stimulus money from Washington for weatherization and state energy programs totaling more than a half-billion dollars for Missouri and Illinois.

President Barack Obama made the announcement this morning along with an estimate that across the country, 100,000 people would be put to work.

That could mean grants for up to \$6,500 per home for a host of home efficiency projects from insulating to upgrading heating and air conditioning. Families making as much as twice the federal poverty level - or about \$44,000 a-year for a family of four, can tap in.

In Missouri, the overall breakdown is \$128 million for the Weatherization Assistance Program and \$57 million for the State Energy Program. In Illinois, the bounty from D.C. is \$243 million for weatherization and \$101 million for the general energy program.

In Missouri, the money will be available through Missouri's Department of Natural Resources, we're told.

Rep. Russ Carnahan, D-St. Louis, was especially pleased given his role as co-founder of the Congressional High Performance Buildings Caucus. He pressed for energy efficiency spending in the stimulus bill last month, which he and all but a handful of Democrats voted for.

"The jobs created by this investment can not be outsourced," Carnahan said, also noting the energy savings benefits to people and the nation from plugging holes in homes and ridding them of wasteful heating and cooling gear.

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